

"DISCARD WILSON AND YOU AND I WILL CONTROL THE UNITED STATES," COL. HOUSE TOLD McCOMBS

'INTRIGUER' ERE WILSON WON, LATER BECAME HIS 'FLUNKY'

Spurned In His Attempts to Swerve McCombs to Let Bryan Get Nomination, House Went Abroad. Returned After Baltimore Convention—Got a Note from McCombs to Nominee and Ingratiated Himself With Him—After the Election He Broached Plan to Obtain Power Through Selecting Cabinet With McAdoo's Help.

By WILLIAM F. McCOMBS,
Wilson's Personal Manager and Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, in His Autobiography, "The Woodrow Wilson Campaign."
Edited by Louis J. Lang, Editor of the Autobiography of Thomas Collier Platt.

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PART VII.

House, "Puny Intriguer" and "Dignified Flunky," tries to bargain with McCombs to discard Wilson for Bryan, and his "We'll Control the United States" offer is furiously rejected. Though opposed to Wilson's nomination, the "Colonel" names four Cabinet Ministers. Fed on Wilson's passion for greatness and said "No" or "Yes" as required. How he muddled things for the President, Morgenthau, Baaruck and Elkus portrayed.

NEXT to the President of the United States, I doubt if anyone has been more inquired about as to who he was, and where he was, than Col. E. M. House, of Texas. I set down the following as the facts as I know them.

Colonel House was the son of an Englishman who went to Texas to reside. He took out citizenship papers and made his children citizens of the United States. House's activities seem to have been in banking in Austin and in the purchase of various tracts of land in Texas. Colonel House was always a weak man physically and never engaged in any apparent occupation. He went to Cornell, but did not finish with his class, which would have been the Class of '91.

McCOMBS' FIRST CALL ON COL. HOUSE.

He had few associates and was very reticent, taking very little interest in the social life of his city. He did, however, invite the governors and other officials to his home and the more important professors of the university. Nobody ever knew him as being active in anything in Austin, although he looked after his farm and his tenants. After he returned from Cornell he spent part of the year in Austin, most of the year in New York and the rest of the year along the New England coast. In New York he spent a quiet, studious kind of life, almost alone.

After we had made arrangements for the Texas campaign in the primaries I was told by Col. T. H. Ball to see a Colonel House at the Gotham Hotel, New York City. The Texas people who were for Mr. Wilson, and who had charge of the organization down there, said, when I asked if they could not produce further funds to move into some of the other primary States, such as Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin and Nebraska, that they had reached the limit of their contributive power.

They stated, however, that there was a Colonel House living at the Gotham who had a substantial income. If I could enlist him in the Wilson cause he might give me some money.

At that time I did not know where to turn for funds, Cleveland H. Dodge had given his contributions in lots of \$5,000 each, and only after much persuasion on my part.

I dropped into the Gotham Hotel one afternoon in November, 1911, and made known myself as the manager of Mr. Wilson's campaign.

I found a quiet little man with strange, cat-like eyes, a broad forehead and a thin face. He spoke in a particularly low manner, almost as one would speak to an-

FASCINATING HISTORY

IN preceding installments Mr. McCombs revealed how Princeton University was about to drop Woodrow Wilson as its head on account of his arrogant ways, and McCombs, "to let him down easy," suggested to several university trustees that a movement be started to run Wilson for Governor of New Jersey. Inside story of the successful Democratic campaign and the election was graphically told by Mr. McCombs. Then he related how Wilson gave the order to groom him for the Presidency, saying that the "Prophet should fulfill his prophecy." The campaign was planned to start in the West and move East. W. G. McAdoo, asked to aid, said every one was against Wilson. "Wilson's candidacy is impossible," Colonel House asserted on the eve of the Baltimore convention. McCombs reveals how George W. Perkins and Charles R. Crane, ostensibly supporting Roosevelt, secretly contributed to Wilson's campaign fund. Cleveland H. Dodge was another big Wall Street contributor. Wilson used Bryan as a pawn at Baltimore convention to win away Champ Clark's supporters and delegates. Bryan tried to make midnight deal to win the nomination away from Wilson and, in dishabille, pleaded with McCombs. Mitchell Palmer's attempt to steal the nomination frustrated. "I owe you nothing," Wilson told McCombs the day after his election. "God ordained that I should be next President, and neither you nor any other mortal could have prevented that." Wilson ignored National Committee as well as McCombs as to patronage. Bryan chosen despite McCombs' warning: "He is a mischief maker." McAdoo and Tamm won high posts while McCombs got nothing and was shunned by Wilson at inaugural.

other in a cathedral. A number of books lay upon his table. There were novels, books on current events, books of essays and books on psychology. Colonel House presented the appearance of a dilettante, passing his life in the calmness of his apartment, not caring anything about matters of particular importance.

When he saluted me he had in his hand a novel. I sat down and began to discuss Presidential possibilities. He said he had not thought much about that, but that from the papers it seemed that Mayor William J. Gaynor, of New York, and Jesse I. Grant, of California, might well turn out to be the candidates for President and Vice President, respectively. He claimed no particular enthusiasm about either. He seemed quite willing to pass on to some other subject.

I, however, having a very practical purpose in mind, continued to hold him to Woodrow Wilson and the reasons why he should be nominated and could be elected.

The conversation passed off in less than half an hour. I went away with the impression that I had met a little man of ill-health, who spent most of his time trying to cling to life and some of its pleasures, and who was quite willing to subordinate everything to this. He did not impress me as a man having any particular notions, and certainly no executive ability. He seemed to take his grasp of things merely from current reading.

His views of men were such as one gained as they passed by on Fifth avenue. I certainly concluded that there was not much in House, but I still had in my mind that the Wilson campaign was bankrupt.

Once a week, if possible, Governor Wilson would come to my apartment, the Royalton, in West Forty-fourth street, to talk over matters in general. I always made it a point, in view of his lack of knowledge of men in public or political life, or men who might be of assistance, to have him meet them there.

WILSON MEETS HOUSE AND HOUSTON.

It is to be understood that Governor Wilson spent his life exclusively in an academic atmosphere. I dare say that even when he went to Washington as President he did not know seventy-five men in public life. Indeed, I think this figure is an exaggeration.

The meetings at the Royalton had this advantage: I could select the men that I knew might be attracted to him, and those whom I knew would dislike him intensely at once. In the case of the latter, I must confess that I kept them away from him and drew the picture myself.

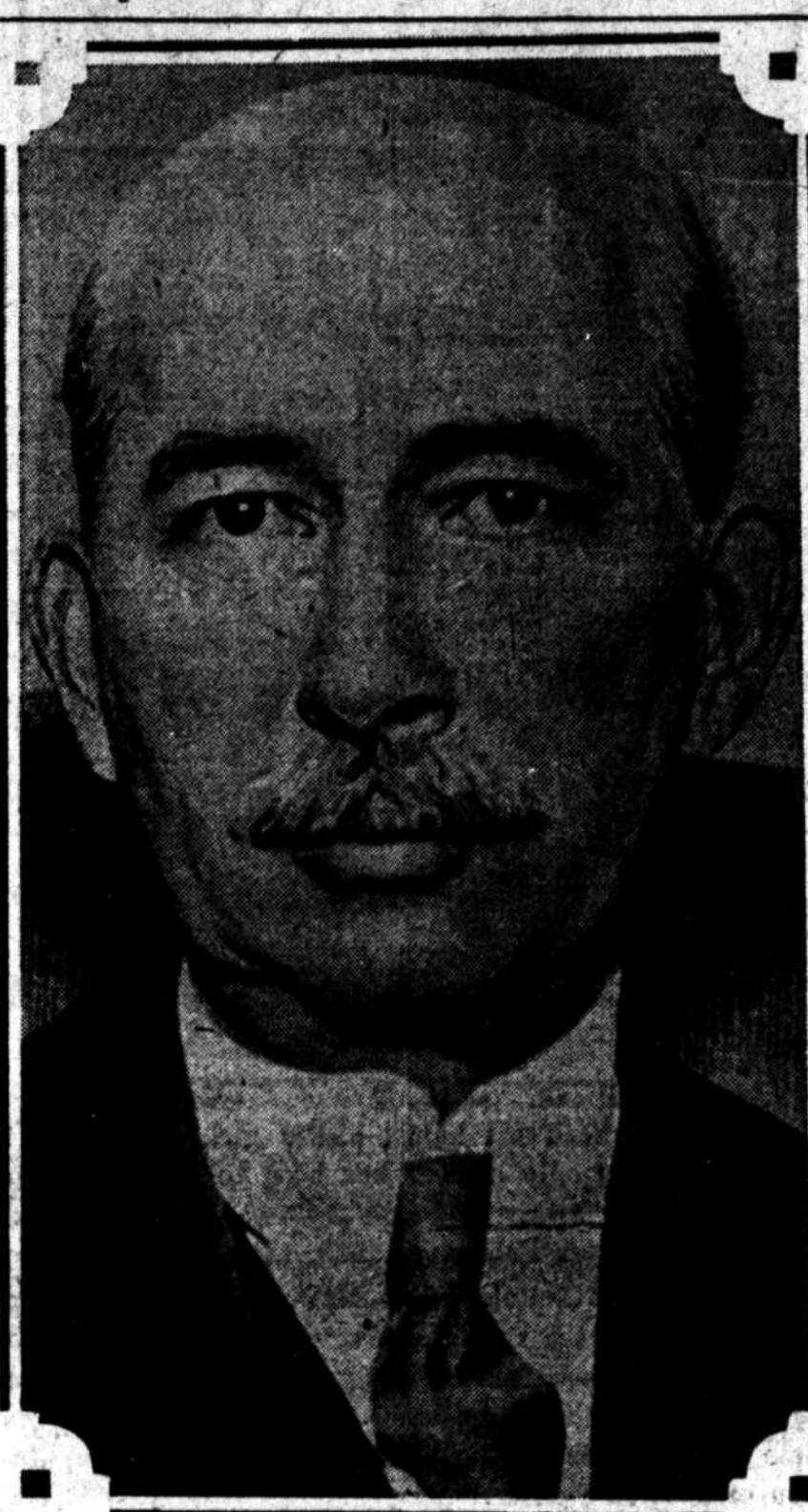
During November Governor Wilson was to be in town. I asked Colonel House if he would care to meet him. Mr. House, of course, accepted with pleasure. In a few minutes he arrived from his hotel. I presented him. The conversation ran along conventional lines. I did not touch any subject involving public affairs, much less the Presidency.

Other gentlemen came who had an appointment, and Colonel House retired.

Late in December, the colonel called up and asked me if I would care to present an invitation to Governor Wilson to dine with a Prof. Houston, who had been president of the University at Austin, Texas, but who was then president of the University of St. Louis.

Mr. House said, incidentally, that Mr. Houston had

COL. E. M. HOUSE, "The Man of Mystery," of whom McCombs says: "A practical man would not keep House about him fifteen minutes."



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made a special study of the tariff and that the two might meet on common ground on that issue, especially since the governor was to make his tariff speech on January 3, 1912.

The dinner passed off quite pleasantly. There was general conversation. Prof. Houston intimated a desire to discuss tariff. Governor Wilson caromed off the issue. There was nothing further heard of that. The conversation then resumed conventional lines—Colonel House not participating.

HOUSE OFFERS PLAN TO "CONTROL U. S."

I went later to see Colonel House on the very practical matter of the contribution. He said it could not be done. He disappeared.

However, during the spring of 1912 I was invited by Colonel House to become a week-end guest at Beverly, Mass. I accepted the invitation and had a very pleasant time.

The Texas situation was discussed. I told him, to use a vulgarism, that it was all "sewed up" and that Colonel Ball, of Austin, had the matter thoroughly in hand. The colonel then said he, too, had been writing some letters.

I can positively state that Colonel House had nothing to do with carrying the State of Texas in the primaries for Woodrow Wilson, except, as he told me himself, he had written a few letters. I think no responsible person who took part in that difficult primary would controvert me for an instant.

But returning to the Beverly week-ends: As I was getting in my cab to go for my train one day, Colonel House came out with me. He said:

"YOU KNOW, MR. McCOMBS, THAT WOODROW WILSON CANNOT BE NOMINATED. I THINK I CAN DO SOMETHING WITH BRYAN, AND IF YOU WILL TURN THE PRESENT FORCES OF WOODROW WILSON TO SENATOR CULBERSON, OF TEXAS, YOU AND I WILL CONTROL THE UNITED STATES FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS."

I tried to be as polite as possible, inasmuch as I was a departing guest. But I said that I had told Governor

TEXAN BLAMED FOR MANY OF THE MISTAKES WILSON MADE

"You and McAdoo Can Select the Cabinet, Except One (Bryan). If We Fix This Thing Up Among Ourselves, McAdoo, You and I Will Control United States for Four Years," the Colonel Informed McCombs, Who Drove Him Away. Later Events Showed Colonel to Have Power.

Wilson that I would be with him until the end. No such combination as the colonel suggested was possible in the convention.

Senator Culbertson was unfortunately a sick man. For that reason he was losing his grip on the public. He came from the wrong State. I felt sure that if Mr. Bryan had anything in his mind at all about the convention it would be his own candidacy.

"PUNY INTRIGUER," REBUFFED, GOES OFF

I left House, feeling that he was a puny intriguer but bold enough to assert an absurdity when it might possibly be to his advantage. I think when this Beverly conversation is analyzed in the light of subsequent events much may be gauged of what happened in Washington during Mr. Wilson's incumbency as President.

Mr. House took no further interest. I never saw nor heard of him again until someone told me that soon before the Baltimore convention he had sailed for Europe for an indefinite stay.

Let it be said here, and my associates in the Baltimore convention will bear me out, that House had nothing whatever to do with that convention or its processes.

On his return, the colonel came to me and said he would like a letter from me of presentation to the Presidential nominee. I wrote one to Governor Wilson. In the confusion of his mail, probably, he did not have a chance to answer it.

Colonel House came to me ten days later much perturbed. He asked if I would give him a letter of presentation, which he would take by hand to Sea Girt. It was a small courtesy. I knew that the governor's business was such that he might not be able to see him for days. But Colonel House persisted. I wrote to the governor saying that this letter presented Colonel House, whom he perhaps remembered as having met at my apartment, and at dinner at Colonel House's home in New York, when Prof. Houston and I were present.

A "DIGNIFIED FLUNKY" AFTER ELECTION.

Colonel House took the letter and expressed profuse thanks. I heard nothing of it for some time. I noticed about the third week before the Presidential campaign closed that Colonel House was around headquarters every afternoon, trying to meet everybody, and being extremely solicitous that I have the pleasure of taking a ride through the park with him. I never did.

In some way or other, which I can never tell, I became suspicious that House was at that time intriguing. I paid no special attention to it because I could not imagine that he could be helpful or hurtful to anyone.

The election took place. I did not see anything more of Colonel House. He had been merely a passing incident to me because I had been in the large business of putting a Big Operation through.

About December 15, 1912, the President-elect went to the Waldorf-Astoria prior to sailing for Bermuda. I called to pay my respects and wish him a pleasant journey.

I found House there, seated with him alone. The President-elect and I had fifteen or twenty minutes general conversation. House sat silently, in a bowed position, his hands crossed over his chest. He never took